

Assembly Bill No. 716

Passed the Assembly September 3, 2009

Chief Clerk of the Assembly

Passed the Senate September 1, 2009

Secretary of the Senate

This bill was received by the Governor this _____ day
of _____, 2009, at _____ o'clock ____M.

Private Secretary of the Governor

CHAPTER _____

An act to add Section 722 to the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 716, Huber. Veteran services: state agencies and departments.

Under existing law, the Department of Veterans Affairs has specified powers and duties relating to veterans.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Veterans Affairs enter into memorandums of understanding or interagency agreements with other state agencies and departments, as specified, to ascertain the veteran status of all persons receiving services, benefits, or assistance from those state agencies and departments, as provided. This bill would provide that the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles may, in consultation with the Department of Veterans Affairs, make available in their field offices brochures, forms, and posters in order to inform veterans of benefits and services. This bill would also require the Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles to collect and send any voluntarily completed forms to the Department of Veterans Affairs on at least a quarterly basis, and to add a link to their Internet Web sites that will direct parties to the Department of Veterans Affairs Internet Web site.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 722 is added to the Military and Veterans Code, to read:

722. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs spent \$7.1 billion in California in federal fiscal year 2008, \$3.1 billion of which was for compensation and pension payments to veterans. These compensation and pension payments are directly paid to veterans and generate a significant contribution to California's economy.

(2) Unfortunately, only approximately 11 percent of veterans who are eligible in California participate in these programs. California ranks 38th nationally in terms of participation rates. On a per capita basis, Texas and Florida collect 44 percent and 31 percent more respectively in disability benefits than California. This difference is primarily due to Texas and Florida having more veterans' services representatives available to assist veterans in pursuing benefit claims.

(3) It is estimated that if California could increase the participation rate to the national average of slightly over 12 percent, over \$330 million more could be returned to the state and local economy and paid to our resident veterans who need that money to support themselves and their families.

(4) County veteran service officers and veterans service organizations have assumed the primary responsibility to assist veterans in accessing these federal benefits, but the funding for this valuable service is scarce. Consequently, the California Department of Veterans Affairs and other state agencies and departments, as well as local government agencies, that come into regular contact with veterans and National Guard members returning from deployment must do a better job informing resident veterans and their dependents of their eligibility for these benefits so that veterans and their dependents can enroll and begin the application process sooner.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that the department enter into memorandums of understanding or interagency agreements with other state agencies or departments, as selected by the department, to ascertain the veteran status of all persons receiving services, benefits, or assistance from those state agencies and departments.

(c) The Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles, in consultation with the department, may make available in their field offices brochures, forms, and posters in order to inform veterans of benefits and services. The Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles shall collect and send voluntarily completed forms to the department on at least a quarterly basis and add a link to their Internet Web sites that directs parties to the department's Internet Web site.

Approved _____, 2009

Governor